KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Kansas Nursery Pest Newsletter

**Plant Protection and Weed Control**
**Kansas Department of Agriculture**
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**Topeka, Kansas 66619**
**www.ksda.gov/plant_protection/**
**Phone: (785) 862-2180 FAX: (785) 862-2182**

**Fall 2009**

## Kansas and the Red Imported Fire Ant

**Glenn Salsbury, Entomologist**

"Can they survive here?"

Yes, they can survive a Kansas winter.

When an infestation was found in a Lawrence neighborhood, the colonies had been there at least two years and they were were spreading. A pest control operator recognized the problem and notified us, the Kansas Department of Agriculture. We took action, and the ants were eliminated. There have been six cases of fire ants in Kansas and none had spread very far.

### How Do Fire Ants Get to Kansas

In all known cases, fire ants arrived in Kansas in plant material, whether it was nursery stock or plants individuals brought from an infested area.

There are at least 269 live plant dealers who receive stock several times a year from areas that are under a fire ant quarantine. The Plant Protection and Weed Control program has five inspectors to cover the entire state conducting live plant dealer inspections and many other duties. This is where we need the help of the nursery industry to ensure that fire ants and other pests are not accidently imported into the state.

Fire ant quarantine areas are required by federal law to treat plants with an approved fire ant insecticide. This must be documented on the paperwork that you receive from the shipping nursery, even if this is done through a broker. There should be a stamp in the shape of a shield with a two letter state code and a number (ex. FL-00000) on the bill of lading or bill of sale. If this is absent, the shipment violates the quarantine and should be refused or kept separate from any other plants. It also should be treated immediately with an approved drench. Immediate treatment is necessary because fire ants tend to move quickly to a new location if they are disturbed.

Keep all paperwork tied to the shipment so it can be traced if a problem does occur. If there is a problem with the paperwork or the shipment, notify the Plant Protection and Weed Control program immediately so that the shipping nursery and authorities in the shipping state can be contacted.

### Why Are Fire Ants Important

Fire ants are important because they directly affect the natural environment, agriculture, human health and our ability to enjoy the outdoors, whether it's our own backyard or community parks. Also, if fire ants become established in Kansas, live plant dealers must meet federal quarantine requirements, which raises your costs to ship your product.

### Fire Ant Behavior

Fire ants may colonize in sunny open areas, under cement slabs, under boards and even in greenhouses. The mounds are not always distinctive. Fire ants defend their nest aggressively and will sting. A person allergic to bee stings will probably have a reaction to fire ant stings. A sting will produce intense itching and a white pustule may develop.

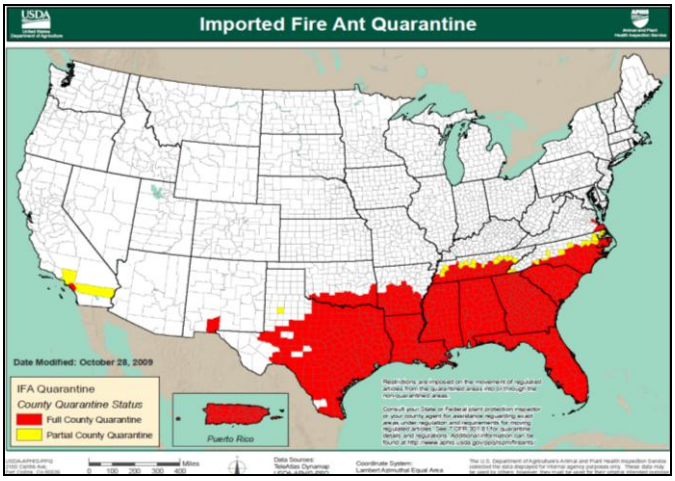
### What to Do if Fire Ants Are Found

If you receive plants with fire ants, move all the plants from that shipment to a secure area away from other plants and immediately drench all of the plants from that shipment with an approved insecticide. Immediately notify the Plant Protection and Weed Control program.

If the ants move out of the plants and establish a nest, do not disturb the mound. Instead, note the location and call the Plant Protection and Weed Control program. We will evaluate the situation and determine how best to treat the mound. If this is not done properly, any survivors could move to a new site and be difficult to find.

Fire ants are one of the insects we can do something about if addressed immediately. We do not want this pest established in Kansas.

For more information, or to report suspected fire ants, contact the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Weed Control program at (785) 862-2180, or glenn.salsbury@kda.ks.gov .




www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/downloads/fireant.pdf

## Quarantined Plants

**Jeff Vogel, Weed Specialist**

*The Plant Pest and Commodities Certification Act gives the secretary of agriculture authority to quarantine plant pests. A quarantined plant cannot be sold, bartered, or moved. Currently, the Kansas Department of Agriculture has four active, permanent quarantines. They are for Grecian foxglove, purple loosestrife, tamarisk spp. (saltcedar), and a federal noxious weed quarantine.*

**Grecian foxglove**, *Digitalis lanata*, is originally from southeastern Europe and was imported to the United States as an ornamental plant. Grecian foxglove's invasive characteristics allowed it to escape cultivation and invade Kansas pastures, hay meadows and timber. The plant produces digitalis, a heart stimulant that can kill cattle and adversely affect humans if the plant is eaten or if bare skin is subject to prolonged exposure.

**Purple loosestrife**, Lythrum *salicaria*, is a perennial weed that invades lakes, rivers and wetlands. Purple loosestrife is established across the United States, and it is noxious in many states, including Nebraska. It has a square stem with purple flowers that have five to six petals per flower. Since it flowers throughout summer, it can produce up to 2.7 million seeds per mature plant.

**Tamarisk (Saltcedar)**, *Tamarix spp*., currently displaces approximately 1.6 million acres of native vegetation in the western United States. Salt cedar is an invasive riparian shrub from Eurasia that was originally sold as an ornamental or planted for steam bank stabilization. It has a fast seedling growth rate, which allows for quick establishment, profuse seed production with mature plants, increased soil salinity contributing to its invasive nature, and elevated water use compared to native species.

The **Federal Noxious Weed** quarantine refers back to the list of noxious weeds declared by the federal government. The list is composed of 72 terrestrial and 19 aquatic species. Included are Japanese bloodgrass (cogongrass), an escaped ornamental grass; giant salvinia, a floating aquatic fern species popular in the water garden trade; and hydrilla, a submerged aquatic plant that is often considered the worst aquatic weed in the United States.

## Be Aware of Plant Material Source

**Jon Appel, Plant Pathologist**

As we enter fall and winter, many of you are planning and ordering plant material. Kansas is a net importer of nursery stock, so we need to be aware of the history of our suppliers and any recent outbreaks or concerns that may involve plant pests.

For plant diseases, two situations present significant concern for the coming year. One has been with us for a few years but still presents a significant risk, while the other is a relatively new disease. The two diseases are ***ramorum* blight** or better known as **Sudden Oak Death** and a rather recent concern called **Thousand Cankers of walnut**.

***Ramorum* blight** is shipped out of California and Oregon in nursery stock. Federal and state programs are doing a good job reducing the risk of importing infected plant material. Despite these efforts, though, *ramorum* blight was found associated with imported plants last year by receiving states. In Kansas, we had two situations of trace forward investigations from Oregon associated stock. Both incidents, after review of remaining stock and testing, proved to be negative.

We recommend that you quiz your supplier regarding their status of *ramorum*-free certification and ask for documentation. Upon receiving material, you should isolate the material for observation. Some common hosts include several oak and maple species,

rhododendrons, mountain laurel, Viburnum, spreading euonymus, and Pieris spp. Symptoms generally include some type of trunk, stem, or leaf death. *Ramorum* blight affects the crown, but generally not the root system. For more information on hosts and symptoms, we recommend this website: www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/pram/.

**Thousand Cankers of walnut** is less of an issue for the nursery trade, but still a concern. Because of its potential to cause a massive outbreak in Kansas black walnuts, nurserymen and others in the plant trade should be aware of its existence, as those who import small trees from western states may inadvertently bring it to Kansas.

A fungus known presently as *Geosmithii morbida*, that a tiny beetle called the walnut twig beetle transmits, causes the disease. The fungus and beetle team up to kill the bark cambium, starving the tree of food reserves. Trees decline losing crown and die in a few short years. The twig beetle is not a good flyer, but it can hitch a ride on logs, bark, firewood, wood packing material and **nursery stock** that may move into our state. ***Our recommendation is to not bring any walnut stock into Kansas from west of the state line.***

Not enough is known about the disease's distribution or how easily it can be detected in nurseries to ensure you receive disease-free stock. If you notice through the course of your work declining walnuts or branches flagging similar to Dutch Elm Disease during summer months, please contact your local county extension office or your Kansas Department of Agriculture nursery inspector. It is extremely important to us to have your help monitoring for this disease.

***Picture 1. Beetle entry holes into a walnut limb.***

***Picture 2. Cankers on wood directly under bark.***
*M. Kennelly, KSU, and J. Appel. KDA*

## Live Plant Dealer Inspections

All persons or businesses in Kansas that sell plants, landscape, or transport live plants, are required to obtain a Live Plant Dealer license. The license fee increases on January 31, 2010, to $65 for a business with $10,000 or more in retail sales. If the business has less than $10,000 in retail sales, they still must maintain a current Live Plant Dealer license and the cost will be $5.

The additional $5 is to replenish the emergency pest fund that has been used recently for pine wilt and hydrilla control.

Plant inspections are conducted at grower locations to facilitate shipment of plants to other states when it is requested. Random verification inspections are also done to check live plant dealers for compliance with Kansas pest freedom standards.

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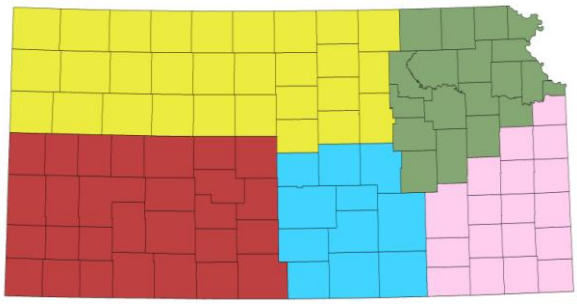

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